

The DHS 'Ohana

A Newsletter for the Department of Human Services Community

The Director's Column

Dear DHS Staff,

Aloha! Welcome to the 2001 springtime edition of the DHS newsletter. We have a new name, and Oliver Schultz is our new editor.

I had hoped to distribute the newsletter to the DHS employee community on a monthly basis by email as an E-LETTER. Unfortunately, this idea proved too difficult to implement.

But James Lum, head of the ISO, has promised that we will all be networked and connected soon so that newsletters can be easily accessed and communication across the entire department can be improved significantly. Look for his article on the coming changes in the next issue.

Our solution for this first edition is to put the newsletter on the DHS website. For those of you who have forgotten the address, it is www.state.hi.us/dhs. We will also be making a limited number of printed copies available to the staff officers

and division administrators for distribution.

We had an excellent legislative session. Due to your excellent work, ALL of our administration bills passed. Our executive budget also passed with very few changes. We now can anticipate a very good year for the DHS and the community of people we serve.



Director Susan M. Chandler and Zachary Hata, son of budget staffer Sandie Hata, sitting in front of the DHS headquarters on Miller Street.

I deeply appreciate Pat Murakami's superb service as our Acting Deputy Director. She has done a great job at the Legislature, tracking bills, testifying, and lobbying. She also has done a wonderful job tracking our Budget both at the DHS and the Legislature. Pat moved into the position like a pro!

I hope the stories in this newsletter are interesting and informative. Please help out by sending Oliver stories or story ideas for future monthly issues.

There are so many good things happening all over the DHS. I want to share the good news, the challenges, and the progress across the vast network at the DHS.

Mahalo for all of your good ideas, your hard work, and your dedication to the people of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Chandler

Promoting Safe and Stable Families in East Hawaii

By Michelle Johnson

The Big Island Substance Abuse Council's (BISAC) Moms and Babies Therapeutic Living Program has emerged as a model program for addressing the needs of substance-abusing mothers and their children.

Designed by the East Hawaii Regional Planning Committee, the program enables young children to live with their mothers in a safe and drug-free environment while the mothers learn parenting and life skills as part of their recovery.

The program is funded through Title IV-B subpart 2, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, which is administered by the Social Services Division. Title IV-B subpart 2 provides family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services.

Housed in a clinically staffed four-bedroom home in Hilo on the Big Island, the Moms and Babies program has space for up to six mothers and twelve children.

A minimum of 32 hours per week of substance abuse treatment services is provided to mothers through their private insurance, Med-Quest, the Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Division, or through a donated scholarship from BISAC.

Meanwhile, children are served in a program designed for drug-exposed and developmentally delayed children. Rent and board are covered through the participant's TANF payment and/or food stamps. Several community agencies and organizations contribute to the program.

Danielle Spain, the program coordinator, and Peggy

Hilton, administrator of the East Hawaii CWS, have identified three effective practices to improve outcomes for children and families affected by substance abuse. They are daily parent-child bonding sessions, off-site substance abuse treatment services that provide mothers respite to focus on recovery, and assignment to each child of a child development specialist who is solely responsible for the child's health outcomes.

The Mom and Babies program opened its doors in November 1999 and can now boast many successful outcomes for participants, including employment, higher education and low recidivism for substance abuse and child protective services referrals.

Michelle Johnson is a family support planner with SSD's Child Welfare Services.

A recent graduate of the Moms and Babies Program, who spoke on condition of anonymity, discussed her experiences with the program and how the program and its staff have helped her:

"The [program] has taught me how to live an alcohol- and drug-free life for 24 hours. That 24 hours has turned into one year. . . . I learned how to cook healthy meals and budget my money as well as time management and parenting skills. I had the opportunity to learn these basic life skills while living with my son. I did not feel so afraid knowing that I was not alone and that there were others just like me. I have gotten help from support groups I never knew existed. On the weekends, I was allowed partner and family visits. That gave me a chance to prove to my family that I wanted to be better.

I got great support from my counselor and the staff in the house. I learned how to ask for help when I needed to and, mostly, I learned how to say 'no.' But most importantly, I know how to take care of my feeling[s] without the use of drugs and alcohol. The program saved my life and gave my children a mom who can love them again. Through the jobs program, I got into college, and I love it. I have learned how to fill my time with positive activities that my children and I can enjoy. I will always be grateful for what I was taught in that program and for the people that [were] placed in my life."

Empowering FTW Recipient in More Ways Than One

By Oliver Schultz

It has been nearly sixteen years since Zena Inaura, 33, first came to the Department of Human Services for help.

At the time in June 1985, Zena had just finished high school and wanted to obtain a bookkeeping degree from Cannon's (now Heald) Business College. Her goal was to earn enough money to go to college to become a teacher.

But an unplanned pregnancy changed those plans. Instead of continuing her education, she stayed at home and prepared for motherhood. Zena gave birth to a daughter in December.

In the spring of 1986 while receiving assistance from the DHS, Zena was able to attend Cannon's. As a single parent who was going to school, she received both financial and medical support as well as food stamps. But her goal had changed. It now was to earn money to raise a child.

On March 27, 1987, Zena received her bookkeeping diploma. Shortly thereafter, she landed a seasonal job as a tax preparer and left welfare. In 1988 she found a permanent position as a clerk-typist with the Bank of Hawaii. And one year later, she gave birth to a second daughter.

In the next five years, she held several positions. But in 1994 Zena could not find a new job and went back on welfare. She remained on welfare after giving birth to her third daughter in 1995.



Zena Inaura has found a new job at the BESSD Haseko Center office.

In 1997, the year in which Zena had her only son, the DHS implemented the First-to-Work Program. Its goal was to provide training and other services to able-bodied adults to help them find jobs.

Zena was given an exemption from the FTW provisions until July 2000 to care for her son until he was able to attend pre-school. Then she had to find a job or volunteer position to keep her benefits. She volunteered at various state agencies, such as Child Care Connection Hawaii.

On February 1, 2001, she moved to the DHS Director's Office as a FTW volunteer, where she was responsible for handling legislative bills and performing clerical tasks. In this time, she also went to ten job interviews, such as at the DOH and OCCC, which she said was intimidating.

But it was DHS's BESSD that gave her a job and a new lease on life. On March 15, 2001, Zena began working at the Haseko Center as an emergency-hire clerk-typist II

"It's wonderful to be back in the work force after six years," she said. She had lost much of her self-confidence and did not think that she was able to survive in the work force. "I had stopped working when a lot of new technology was being introduced, such as WordPerfect," she explained. But Zena said that her new job enables her to refresh her skills and acquire new skills.

Zena now is hoping to be offered a permanent position at the DHS "to get me to become fully self-sufficient."

Oliver Schultz is the editor of The DHS 'Ohana.

VRSBD Selects Seven Employers of the Year for 2000

By Oliver Schultz

Seven Hawaii businesses won the VRSBD "Employer of the Year" award for fiscal year 2000. This award is given annually to businesses to acknowledge them for their willingness to hire and accommodate persons with disabilities.

The recipients this year are the Army/Air Force Exchange Systems and Big City Diner, Inc., from Honolulu; Cookies in Paradise from Aiea, Oahu; VIP Foodservice from Kahului, Maui; Video Showplace and Keauhou Cinema from Kailua-Kona, Hawaii; and Kauai Fruit and Flowers from Kapaa, Kauai.

Businesses are nominated at the end of a fiscal year by the five branches of VRSBD. The division has a branch for each of the four counties of Hawaii that focuses on vocational rehabilitation as well as one that is responsible solely for the services for the blind.

Nominations are also accepted from the sections and offices within a branch. For instance, the Oahu branch has six sections: Deaf Services, Metro, East, West, Central, and Windward. The Maui branch has a Molokai field office, and the Big Island has Hilo and Kona field offices.

The branches and their subdivisions may nominate any number of businesses for the "Employer of the Year" award. This year, all seven of the nominated employers were selected to receive the award. Most of these businesses hired several persons with disabilities and went out of their way to accommodate them by means of a flexible work schedule and modified work requirements. They also sought to find qualified persons with disabilities through their local VR branch.

The Army/Air Force Exchange Systems, which provides services to exchanges and food facilities at Hickam AFB and other army bases, interviewed and employed two clients from the VR central branch.

One client was hired on a temporary basis as a full-time cashier. When it became evident that he was having difficulty performing the required duties, AAFES developed a training program tailored to his needs. The training enabled him to become comfortable in his job and also to achieve a full-time, permanent status three months later.

The general manager at the Big City Diner has hired four

persons with disabilities. When one suffered a personal injury outside of work, the manager was willing to hold his position and continue medical coverage until he was able to return to work.

Some businesses also are better off hiring VR clients than regular employees. The Kona-based family business Video Showplace was experiencing constant employee turnovers when they asked their local VR office for a devoted and reliable client. They received a client, who, after some initial training, became so accomplished that they gave him additional job tasks and an increase in his work hours and wages.

Each employer is thanked in an awards ceremony held at their business location, in which a legislator from their district presents them with a VRSBD engraved plaque and a legislative certificate. The ceremony is attended by the division and branch administrators, the nominating counselors, and the media.

Oliver Schultz is the editor of The DHS 'Ohana. VRSBD staff specialist Joy Patterson also contributed to this story.

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